



HOW TO...

Work across worksheets

It's easy to lose your way when you're working across multiple worksheets. Here Jennifer Bagley reveals some of the tools you can apply in Excel to help keep tabs on your work

People sometimes get confused by Excel's terminology for its documents. A workbook is a file that opens when you start the program but this workbook will consist of several sheets called worksheets. Most of us will have a workbook with more than one worksheet of data in, and frequently the worksheets will display the data in the same way. For example, if you have a worksheet for each member of staff showing their expenses claims, it is likely that each sheet will have the same headings across the columns and be divided down the rows with the same categories.

There are lots of tools and tricks that can help you when working across multiple worksheets. Here we show you some that can save you time. We've used Microsoft Excel 2003, but most features are also available in earlier versions. Where a feature is specific to this version, we'll tell you.

1 You can save time and effort by applying formatting changes to the same cells across selected worksheets simultaneously. You can also change the cell's contents, add rows or insert columns in this way.

Open your workbook, and select the worksheets that you want to alter. Do this by

clicking on the tab for the first worksheet, then holding down the Ctrl key and clicking on the tab for each other worksheet you want to select. In our example, we've chosen all three worksheets. However, you may not wish to select all of them; you can choose which worksheets you want to work on using this method.

2 The Ctrl key can also be used to highlight non-adjacent cells in a worksheet. To select columns, hold down the Ctrl key and click on the header tile for column A (that's the A at the top of the column), then on column C and column E. The same applies for rows. Here the row header tile is the number on the far left-hand side.

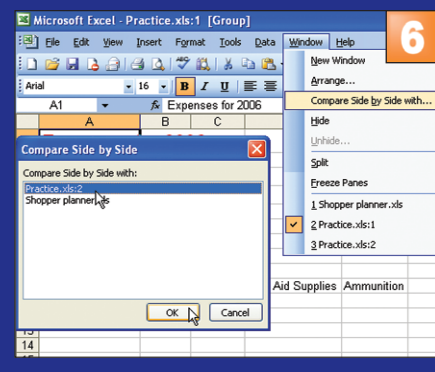
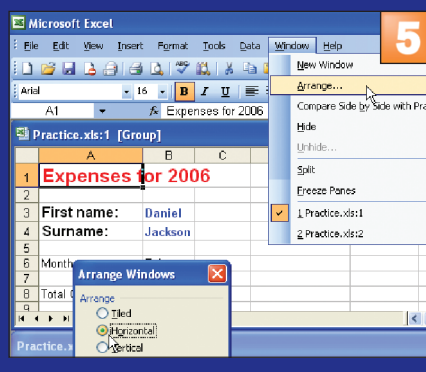
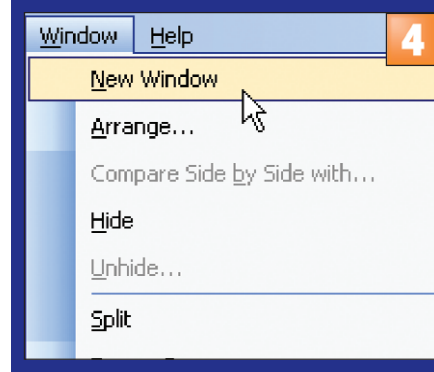
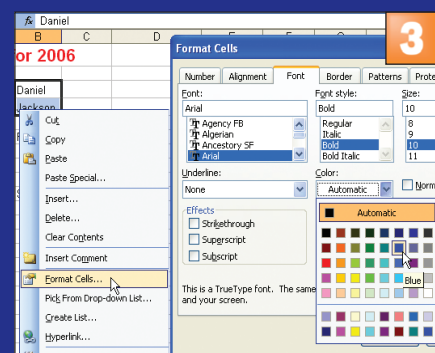
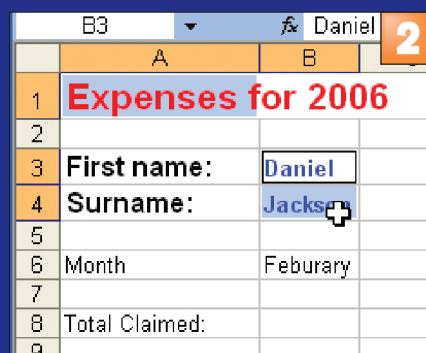
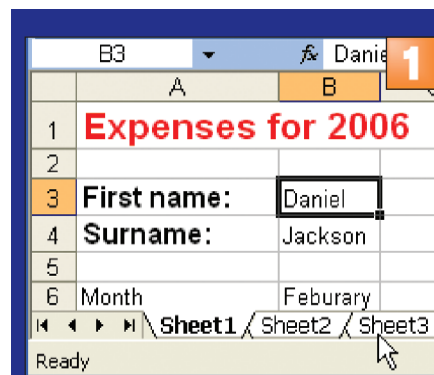
It also works for individual cells; hold down the Ctrl key and click on cell A1, then B3 and B4. The copy and cut commands can't be performed on cells selected this way. The Shift key also comes in handy. Click on cell A1 and then, holding down the Shift key, click on cell A4. All the cells between those two are highlighted.

If you've ever tried to select a range of cells that includes rows or columns off the displayed area, you'll know how tricky Excel can make it. It can speed off across the spreadsheet, or down, until

you're hundreds of rows or columns away from where you want to be. It's better to use the Shift and arrow keys. Click on cell A1, hold down the Shift key and press the right arrow key until you've highlighted cells across a number of columns. Keep holding the Shift key down and press the down arrow key.

3 Select the cells to which you want to make changes. In our example, we're changing the font characteristics of each person's name, which all appear in cells B3 and B4 on their respective worksheets. The quickest way to do this is to highlight the cells, right-click and select Format Cells. Click on the tabs in the box that appears to make changes to the font, cell colour, border and so on.

4 If you're making a lot of changes, it can be handy to check what you've done on each sheet. Doing this when you've already selected the worksheets is a pain. The process undoes the selection, so you have to select all over again. It's easier, especially if you're making a lot of alterations, to open the workbook again in a new window.





To do this, go to the Window menu and select New Window. Excel opens another copy of the same workbook. It has the same name as the original, but the workbooks are numbered. The copy, numbered 2, will be the active workbook. Go to the tab for the worksheet you want to check. When you want to go back to the original, click on the Window menu and select the workbook from the list of open files. Use this process at any point to check on the changes made. This is the same workbook, not a copy – it has just been opened twice. Any changes made in one will immediately be shown in the other view.

5 One feature in Excel that makes working across multiple workbooks less of a headache is the Arrange tool. This tiles all the workbooks onscreen. Go to Window and select Arrange. In the box that appears, click on Horizontal to select it; this usually arranges the spreadsheets in a landscape format. Whichever workbook was active will appear at the top.

If you'd like them to appear in a different order, click on the workbook you'd like to move to the top, select Arrange from the Window menu and click OK. If you have more than one view of the same workbook open (as in Step 4) and it is only those windows you'd like to see tiled, tick the box next to 'Windows of active workbook'.

6 The Arrange feature isn't quite as useful if you have several different workbooks open but want only two visible at a time. However, there's an addition to the Window menu in Excel 2003 that makes life that bit easier for people who spend a lot of time working on spreadsheets. Make sure one of the workbooks you want to view is active. Click on the Window menu. Under Arrange you should see the 'Compare side by side with' menu item. Select this. If you have more than two workbooks open, a box appears. Click on the relevant workbook in the list provided.

7 When you've arranged the two workbooks this way, the Compare Side by Side toolbar appears. This has just three options on it, but it is still a useful tool. The first button allows synchronous scrolling. When this is selected, you can scroll through both worksheets at the same time; scroll through one, and the other will match your movements automatically.

You might reposition or resize one of the workbooks, perhaps by clicking on the Maximise button, or minimising it to see a workbook underneath. To go back to the side-by-side arrangement quickly, click on the second button on the toolbar, called Reset Window Position. When you've finished, click on Close Side by Side.

8 You may like information from one workbook to appear in another workbook. You could just copy and paste it, but then you'd have to do that each time the data changed. An easier way is to set up a link so the data from a cell in one workbook appears automatically in the other. When the original information is altered, the changes are updated in the linked workbook.

The workbook into which you are inserting the link is called the destination workbook; the one you'll be getting the data from is called the source workbook. Open the destination workbook, and select the cell or cells in which you want the data to appear. In our case, the cell is currently empty, so we've entered the = sign.

9 Go to the Window menu and select the source workbook, the one you'll be taking data from. When it opens, click on the appropriate cell. Excel automatically completes the formula in the destination workbook for you. When you've finished, press the Enter key to complete the formula. In our example, the yearly total in our Team Budgets workbook will also appear in the

DID YOU KNOW?

If you have a particularly large worksheet, it is possible to skip straight to the beginning by pressing the Ctrl and Home keys simultaneously.

Budgets workbook. Any changes made to the first will be shown in the second.

10 You can use formulae to work with data across several worksheets in the same workbook. Say you want to take the contents of cell C2 in sheet 2, add them to the contents in cell D5 of sheet 3 and display the result in cell B2 in sheet 1. Click on cell B2 in sheet 1 and enter the = sign to let Excel know you're about to start a formula. Then click on cell C2 in the second worksheet; Excel will add that bit to the formula for you. Enter a + symbol in the formula bar, then click on cell D5 in sheet 3 and press the Enter key.

11 It is possible to merge workbooks, but if you think you'll need to do this, some forward planning is required. This feature works only if the workbook you're going to merge is a copy of a shared workbook. But it's invaluable when you're working in team situations and members want to take a copy of the spreadsheet away with them to work on.

To share the original spreadsheet, go to the Tools menu and select Share workbook. Tick the box next to 'Allow changes by more than one user at a time'. To make copies of this workbook, use Save As from the File menu. The new file must be given another name to allow merging later.

12 When the other team members have finished with their copies and sent the workbooks back to you, it's time to put them all together in one file. Open the workbook into which you're going to merge the others. From the Tools menu, select Compare and Merge Workbooks. Highlight the files you want to merge, using the Ctrl key if you want to select more than one file, and click OK. You'll be notified if a workbook has had no changes made to it.

